

This submission is made by [redacted text] from [redacted text] to the ABS review of 2021 census topics.

The submission covers three suggestions:

1. Add a question to ask “does the person have any limitation or restriction in one of the listed (non-core) activities?”
2. Add a question to ask “is the person a participant of NDIS”?
3. Disseminate the data items separately for the existing questions 20 to 23.

Suggestion 1: People having restriction in one of non-core activities

The disability related questions since 2006 Census have provided a rich source of information for comparing the characteristics of Australians needing assistance in core activity (ASSNP) to the rest of the community. We understand that the disability related questions are not designed to be used for estimates of disability prevalence. However, they not only provide great insights into subpopulations (such as Indigenous in remote and very remote areas), they do also facilitate the estimation of disability prevalence in small areas.

One of the limitations of the data collected via these questions is the coverage. Because ASSNP is conceptually equivalent to the profound and severe disability¹ and practically captures only about a quarter of Australian people with disability, it severely constrains the use of the Census data to its full potential.

We recommend ABS add an additional question to the 2021 Census to capture those who have limitation or restriction in non-core activities. Other ABS disability modules have established a good base for listing these non-core activities. In order to minimise the survey load, we do not propose to have individual questions for each of these non-core activities. Instead, it should allow as a whole identification of a sub-population who have restriction in any one of the non-core activities.

Given this sub-population differs from ASSNP population, it should be reported separately. The separate reporting will ensure the stability of ASSNP population as well. However together they will capture all Australians with disability.

This expansion on coverage is also timely in the context of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which by 2012 will be in place for 10 years and its participants are not limited to people needing assistance in one of the three core activities. Improved coverage of people with disability in Census collection will provide a valuable source of information to policy makers and general community.

¹ ABS (2010) Cat 4431.0.55.002.

Suggestion 2: NDIS participants

By 2021, the NDIS will be 10 years in the running. It is desirable to include a question to identify NDIS participants. Inclusion of a NDIS identifier in Census will greatly ensure the Census has direct connection and contribution to one of the nation's major social policy reform and largest investments.

However, we recognise that data linkage between the Census data and NDIS participant data set would be a much economical and accurate way to identify the sub-population. Therefore, we encourage the two national agencies working together on this innovative approach. NDIS identifier in 2021 Census should only be considered if the data linkage fails to eventuate.

Suggestion 3: Dissemination of disability related data

We would like to use this formal opportunity to make a suggestion on disaggregation of ASSNP. Since Census 2006, ASSNP has been released as an aggregated variable that combines the results of four questions (Questions 20-24). However, answers to each of these questions are individually valuable. We ask ABS to consider providing these data items separately, at least in the more advantaged data dissemination channels (for example, TableBuilders, CURF, and potentially in MADIP). This would allow advanced data users to explore the Census statistics to the full potential.

Please feel free to contact us for further information if required.

Your sincerely

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